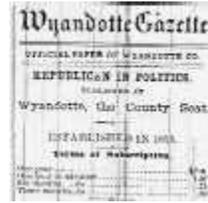


The Wyandotte Gazette, March 31, 1882



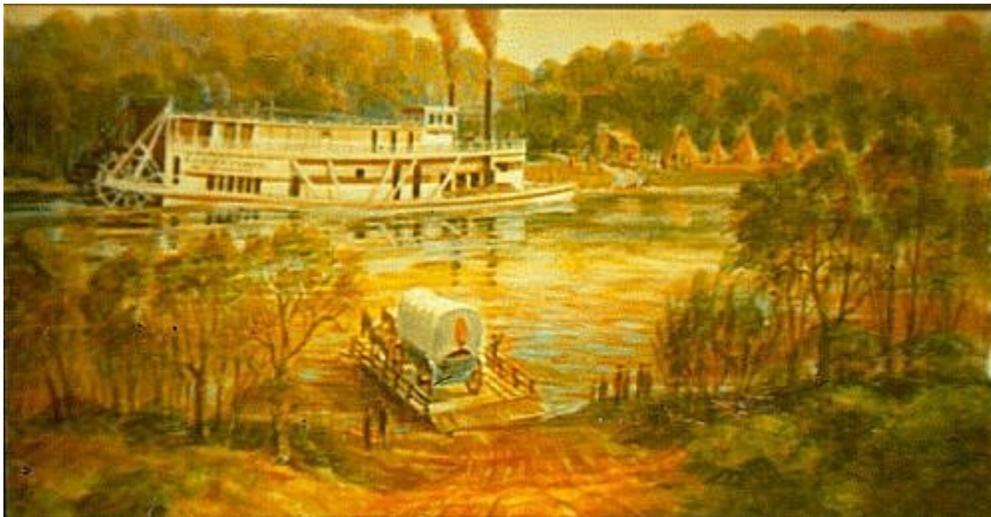
## THE KANSAS ARGONAUTS

Or the Voyage of the "Lightfoot," by a Lady Passenger--Interesting Recollections by Mrs. C.I.H. Nichols.

**Editor's Note:** Clarina I.H. Nichols wrote two letters regarding antebellum (pre-Civil War) Quindaro, Kansas to the *Wyandotte Gazette* newspaper. They were divided into a four part series. This is Part I of the series. Part II was in the *Wyandotte Gazette* of June 16, 1882. Part III was in the *Wyandotte Gazette* of December 22, 1882. Part IV was in the *Wyandotte Gazette* of December 29, 1882.

(Transcriptions are presented without changes except to improve readability.)

### The Lightfoot of Quindaro



Artist - Charles Gosling  
Photo courtesy of Betty Roberts

EDITORS WYANDOTTE GAZETTE:

In reply to your kind suggestion, that recollections of life in Kansas, in *ante-bellum* days, from my pen, would gratify you and be acceptable to your readers, I promise a cordial effort to realize both. The freedom implied in your considerate assurance, that you would not limit my contribution to a summary, nor exact dates, or dictate subjects, but leave me free to draw on my fund of facts, chronicled or unchronicled, alone renders my compliance with your request possible, weighted as I am by physical conditions which will more or less interfere with, if not detract from, the interest and spirit of my pen tracks. Many an incident petty in itself, gave a zest to

that pioneer experience that redeemed it from insipidity: while many another apparently isolated fact, has proved its significance of results already gathered up and preserved by the careful historian. In jotting impressions of the past they present themselves or are suggested by journalistic notices of the day -- without worry or special research, which would probably defeat the object by indefinitely postponing its accomplishment -- I will undoubtedly give occasion for criticism, which kindly made will be as cordially entertained. Having thus made terms with publishers and readers of the GAZETTE -- old friends all around -- I will begin with a reminiscence brief and pertinent to the occasion--my introduction to Wyandotte--recalled to mind by a recent reference in one of your State papers, to the experimental navigation of the Kaw in the early day of Kansas settlement.

In memory's gallery, in a setting all by itself, is a clean cut picture of that pleasant three days trip in March, '57, when the genial Arny, Judge Bailey and the irrepressible Raelf, were conspicuous in the party of immigrants that, having arrived at Wyandotte in the early morning and refreshed themselves in an old river steamer--improvised as a hotel--with over-done cold biscuits, gristle steaks and muddy coffee, took passage on the Lightfoot -- which was waiting in the Kaw -- for Lawrence, the Mecca of the Free State pilgrims. Wyandotte was then a paper city, at nurse; little to be seen beyond its site up in the morning sunshine.

As we steamed up the river in our neat little craft, our surroundings were cheerful. I might say exhilarating. The company, generally intelligent and happily expectant, was a mixture of fresh recruits from the east with a generous sprinkling of earlier settlers from Lawrence, who had joined us for the up river voyage. To say that each individual was an animated interrogation point, differing in the manner rather than the subjects of their questioning, will convey a pretty good idea of the general tone of conversation in the little circles collected on deck, in cabin or steerage.

The man who hugged capital in his belt, anxious to ascertain the quantity and prospective value of the soil it might be made to represent, was blandly entertained by the man solicitous to transfer at a profit, investments already made. City agents interested in the sale of town lots were there also, bidding for desirable elements of prosperous growth, so that between the rival town interests and the floating capital there was a very amiable triangular movement of a business character.

Women most eager to learn the home side of the whole matter, questioned and listened, their hopes and fears shadowed in their eager eyes. While a few disembarassed souls fell back on their mental resources and stirred the social element with enjoyable success.

Of the latter class were Judge Bailey and Raelf. No two individuals could have been more unlike in every point of view. The former one of the finest specimens of a man in size, physical development and unstudied ease; the latter studying for effect and nervously "uneasy as a fish out of water," suggested rather than promised an erratic maturity; for he was, in years a minor. The Judge, whose nature was nicely inlaid with a wholesome poetic temperament, was a perfect compendium of the best poetry of the best school of poets -- cheerful, invigorating, restful, patriotic poets. With a voice and delivery to make even ordinary poetry agreeable, he held his auditors in refreshing sympathy with his favorite authors.

Raelf, possessed by the most erratic of poetic imaginings and enwrapped in his own compositions, would repeat folio, after folio in a strained monotone that rasped the nerves of a critical reader beyond power to appreciate the merits of his best -- and there were stanzas quite above the ordinary -- poems. Poor Raelf! It may be that intuitive apprehensions for his highly strung and ill-balanced character had something to do with the innate repulsion I felt in his society. There seemed to be no *real* life for him. Nothing practical; not a hook to hang fruition on, cropped out in his poetic ravings and I felt a painful sympathy as for one frantically battling in waters beyond his depth. With all his good qualities he lacked the necessary outfit for the world he was in; what a world it would have been -- a world fitted to him!

If the course of true love never runs smooth so neither does the trimmest vessel with a drunken pilot, which misfortune, attached to our beautiful experiment, eventually invited disaster in the shape of a conflict between our towering smoke-stacks and a leaning tree-top on the river's bank. I think it was in the forenoon of the second day, when the women and children were quietly enjoying themselves in the upper part of the cabin and numbers of the men were sitting and standing around the long dinner table at the lower end, that there came a crash as if the heavens had fallen -- shivered over our heads. Clutching hastily at my children I made towards the steerage; suddenly the tumult was arrested by the reassuring tones of an unpretending little woman admonishing us (women) "not to act like fools." Turning in the doorway, the first man I saw was Raelf, who, hurrying out from under the table sprang into a chair in our end of the cabin and with a theatrical wave of his hand exclaimed:

"Let us be men! Our women are turned to men and our men are all women."

Judge Bailey's whereabouts during this scene, I cannot now recall: he may have been under the table with Mr. Babcock and the rest of Raelf's women, but the amusement at the table not being of a kind to attract him, I doubt if he was near enough to avail himself of its shelter; and then, I would not fail to remember his then portly figure, as I do Babcock's -- his face all aglow -- creeping out, the observed of all observers -- if he had emerged from that womanly(?) retreat. If however my doubt should seem to the Judge insufficient for a verdict in his favor, let him speak; we all will be glad to hear him. The Judge is a charming conversationalist, and never speaks but to the edification of his hearers.

The mirth which followed this comic tragedy, with the sanguine mood of the party, the social chats and the evening dance, soon repaired all damages inside; and outside efforts, with the delay of a few hours, finally landed us safely at LAWRENCE, where friends, old and new, gave us a hearty welcome.

Yours Truly,  
C.I.H. NICHOLS,  
Pomo, California, March 9th, 1882.

P.S. -- I could not in this my first communication to a Kansas journal, since the notable event, neglect to congratulate all the parties interested in the appointment of Mrs. Cora M. Downs a regent of the university, a position she will occupy to the credit of her sex. Happier still for the State and womanhood, is the fact, that scores of women eminently qualified are waiting to be installed in positions equally

honorable and vital to the interests of education and good government, in your glorious State. Give them a chance.

Perhaps some of your readers will remember my second son, A.O. Carpenter, who in the border struggle was one of Capt. Shores' company in the battle of Black Jack, 1856, under Old John Brown, and received a bullet wound in front of his left arm. The following item from a San Francisco paper may be of interest to numbers of his friends and my own:

"At the eighth annual exhibition of the San Francisco School of Design the Alovrd Gold Medal for the best drawing from a cast, was awarded to Miss Grace Carpenter of Ukiah. Miss Carpenter, who is hardly 17 years of age, is daughter of A.O. Carpenter, of Ukiah."

And I may add, grand-daughter of Mrs. C.I.H. Nichols, late of Kansas. She was one of ten competitors, selected by the teachers from a class of forty.

End of Part I.